

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I was regrettably absent from the Chamber today during rollcall votes 2, 3, 4, and 5. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall 2, "yea" on rollcall 3, "yea" on rollcall 4, and "yea" on rollcall 5.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, January 21, I was unavoidably detained in my congressional district and was unable to be present for recorded votes. Had I been present, I would have voted in the following manner:

On H. Res. 492, Honoring the contributions of Catholic schools, I would have voted "yea"; on H. Res. 491, Honoring Individuals Who are Mentors and Supporting Efforts to Recruit More Mentors, I would have voted "yea"; on H. Res. 490, Recognizing and Commending the Achievements of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, I would have voted "yea"; and on H. Res. 489, Stating the Agreement of the House of Representatives with the Sentiment Expressed by the Senate in Senate Resolution 281, I would have voted "yea."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, January 20, I was unable to be present for rollcall vote No. 1, the House Quorum Call. Had I been present, I would have voted "present" for rollcall vote No. 1.

Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, January 21, I was unable to be present for rollcall vote No. 2, Honoring Catholic schools, rollcall vote No. 3, Benefits of mentoring, rollcall vote No. 4, Recognizing NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab and Mars Rover Mission, and rollcall vote No. 5, Expressing sorrow and respect for former Senator Paul Simon. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" for rollcall votes No. 2-5.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES, SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON) laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Financial Services, the Select Committee on Homeland Security, and the Committee on Small Business:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, January 20, 2004.

Hon. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Effective January 20, 2004, I hereby resign from the Committee on Financial Services, the Select Committee on Homeland Security, and the Committee on Small Business due to my pending appointment to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Sincerely,

CHARLES A. GONZALEZ,
Member of Congress.

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.

There was no objection.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 495) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 495

Resolved, That the following named Member be and is hereby elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE: Mr. Gonzalez.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW RANKING MINORITY MEMBER ON COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

(Mr. MENENDEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate, on behalf of all the members of the Democratic Caucus, our colleague, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GORDON), whom the Democratic Caucus elected as the new ranking member on the Committee on Science. He is a proven leader on the Committee on Science and within this body, and I know that he will serve our Nation well in his new capacity.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. LEWIS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I wish to address the House for the purpose of inquiring of the majority leader the schedule for next week.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, the House will convene on Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. for morning hour and 2 p.m. for legislative business. We will consider several measures under suspension of the rules, and a final list of those bills will be sent to Members' offices by the end of this week. Any votes called on these measures will be rolled until 6:30 p.m.

On Wednesday, the House will convene at 10 a.m. for legislative business. We plan to consider S. 1920, which extends Chapter 12 of the Federal Bankruptcy Code until July 1, 2004. In addition, we hope to consider S. 610, which

would provide some important management reforms at NASA.

Finally, it is my understanding that our colleagues in the Senate are likely to pass the omnibus appropriations bill, possibly as early as tomorrow. However, I would like to make all Members aware that if the Senate does not act, we may be forced to move a long-term continuing resolution next week, as the present continuing resolution we are operating on expires at the end of next week.

I thank the gentleman for yielding and would be happy to answer any questions he may have.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the leader for that information.

Mr. Majority Leader, when the Congress adjourned for the year last year, it failed to extend the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program, leaving 90,000 American workers and their families every week, roughly one-half million workers by the end of this month, in the lurch. We have 200 Democrats who have signed a discharge petition that would bring to the floor legislation to extend this much-needed help to those workers.

Can the majority leader tell the House, tell all of us when he will schedule debate on this important matter?

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I continue to yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's yielding to me.

As the gentleman knows, he was here last night, the President mentioned last night that the third-quarter economic growth in 2003 was the strongest in 20 years and that housing starts and home ownership rates are up and at an all-time high; that financial markets are growing, after a long contraction; that interest rates are low; that factory orders are up; that unemployment is on the decline. Unemployment benefit claims have decreased actually every month since September, and the unemployment rate today is 5.7 percent, which is almost a full percentage point lower than the rate that we had in 1994 when a Democrat Congress and a Democrat President discontinued an expanded unemployment compensation program.

So with a growing economy and a recent precedent for managing these scenarios, it is clear to the majority that the best employment program is to keep growing jobs and paychecks instead of extending and expanding Federal programs.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, is the majority leader telling us there is not a need to bring this legislation to the floor of the House for a vote when more than 200 Democratic Members have signed a discharge petition?

Mr. DELAY. The last time I checked, Mr. Speaker, 218 is a majority.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me, and I appreciate the distinguished leader's response in regards to this issue.

Let me just point out, if I might, that we now have 300,000 fewer people that are seeking employment because they have given up, and that brings down the unemployment rate when in reality it is higher than it has ever been. And the last time we did not extend the unemployment, the last recession, we did that when there was a significant growth in employment. We have had 1,000 new jobs created in the last month. We have a net loss of over 2.4 million jobs in the last 3 years.

I would just urge the distinguished leader to talk to members of both caucuses. This is an important issue. There are a lot of people who are being lost in this economy that need this help. And I would just urge the leader to consider scheduling debate on the floor on the extension of the Federal unemployment accounts. We have bills sponsored by both Democrats and Republicans on this issue. It is an important subject. And I thank my friend from Georgia for yielding to me.

ADJOURNMENT TO FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2004

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 10 a.m. on Friday, January 23, 2004.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

ADJOURNMENT FROM FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2004 TO TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2004

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns on Friday, January 23, 2004, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 27, 2004, for morning hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF HONORABLE MAC THORNBERRY TO ACT AS SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE TO SIGN ENROLLED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS THROUGH JANUARY 27, 2004

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 21, 2004.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MAC THORNBERRY to act as Speaker pro tempore to sign enrolled bills and joint resolutions through January 27, 2004.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the appointment is approved.

There was no objection.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

REGARDING THE NEW MEDICARE LAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, in last year's State of the Union address, President Bush called Medicare "the binding commitment of a caring society." Last night in his State of the Union address, the President said the Medicare prescription drug bill that was enacted last year "kept a basic commitment to our seniors."

The new Medicare law kept a basic commitment all right, but as the tens of thousands of seniors who have quit AARP would likely agree, the commitment was not to America's seniors. The new Medicare law means an additional \$139 billion in profit to the drug industry over the next 8 years. The President did fulfill his commitment, a commitment he had to the drug industry. The new Medicare bill the President signed means an additional \$14 billion in subsidies to the insurance industry over the next 10 years, again a commitment the President fulfilled to his insurance company backers and contributors. But the President's commitment meant virtually nothing to seniors, many of whom will not have access to any benefit until 2006 and after that will have access to only a very inadequate drug benefit. The new benefit will cover less than half of a senior's drug costs. The average senior would do better traveling to Canada to purchase her prescription drugs. Of course the Bush administration has been busy pressuring Canadian pharmacies to stop selling medicine to American consumers.

Again, the President's commitment to the drug companies won out. The reason drug prices are lower in Canada is because the Canadian government negotiates price with the drug industry. But the new Medicare law expressly forbids the U.S. Government from negotiating with the drug industry to bring drug prices down. Get that. This new drug bill prohibits the government from using its buying power, representing 40 million Medicare beneficiaries, this new law prohibits the government from negotiating with the drug industry to bring prices down. That is why the drug industry's profits are set to explode under the President's new Medicare privatization bill. Again, it is a commitment not to America's seniors but a commitment President Bush made to his drug company contributors. If seniors had asked the President and the Congress to short-change them on drug coverage while giving the drug industry a free ride, it would be accurate to say that yes, he really has fulfilled his commitment to them, but that is clearly not what seniors asked us to do.

Medicare HMOs enjoyed a 118 percent increase in profits last year. Yet we are about to hand them an additional \$14.3 billion. According to the General Accounting Office, we already overpay HMOs by 20 percent. This new law will ensure we shower them with more money, we waste even more taxpayer dollars subsidizing the insurance industry, again a commitment to the insurance industry and the President's financial contributors in the insurance industry and HMOs, a commitment he made to them when they were so supportive in his campaign.

Mr. Speaker, in the end, we have a President who always consistently makes a choice. If it is a choice between corporate interests and the public interest, this President chooses corporate interests every single time.

AL QAEDA DEALS HEROIN TO FUND TERRORISM OPERATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I just returned from Pakistan's frontier where Osama bin Laden is likely hiding. We describe bin Laden as a terrorist. While that label applies, I think we can be more accurate. He has become a narco-terrorist.

During my mission, I learned that bin Laden's source of donated funds has been reduced. In response, bin Laden has become one of Pakistan's top heroin dealers. Kandahar trafficker Haji Bashir Noorzai provides 1,000 kilograms of heroin each month to bin Laden's organization. That provides al Qaeda with \$24 million a year to fund his attacks against the West.

If we are to catch bin Laden and to wrap up his organization, we must attack his new source of income, heroin.